

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
L-03 H-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 IO-13 DLOS-09
OES-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AF-10 ACDA-07 COME-00 EB-08
ERDA-05 NEAE-00 /119 W
-----181335Z 122204 /44

P R 181316Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1829
INFO AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN
SECDEF WASHDC
CINCUSNAVEUR
COMSIXTHFLT
EUCOM VAIHINGEN GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES

S E C R E T PARIS 11206

CINCUSNAVEUR PASS POLAD; EUCOM PASS POLAD; USDOCOSOUTH
PASS CINCSOUTH FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PLOS PBOR LY IT TS FR
SUBJ: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN SHELF DISPUTE: DISCUSSIONS WITH
FRENCH AND ITALIANS

REF: (A) TUNIS 2535 (NOTAL), (B) PARIS 10513;
(C) STATE 80407
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1. WHILE DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR NORTH AFRICA TRISTAN
D'ALBIS EXPRESSED QUAI REGRETS THAT UNDER SECRETARY
HABIB WAS UNABLE TO CONSULT IN PARIS ON SHELF DISPUTE,
HE SEEMED REASSURED BY ORAL MESSAGE FROM HABIB WHICH
EMBOFF TRANSMITTED APRIL 15, INDICATING THAT THE
TUNISIANS SAID THEY WOULD ACCEPT IMPARTIAL ARBITRATION

OF THE DISPUTE AND APPEAR UNLIKELY TO TAKE ANY ACTION WHICH WOULD FORCE A SHOWDOWN WITH LIBYA. THE DANGER IN FRENCH EYES, ALBIS SAID, COMES MORE FROM A TUNISIAN EFFORT TO FOCUS INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION ON THEIR CLAIMS BY CREATING AN INCIDENT, THAN FROM THE LIBYANS, WHOSE WEALTH MAKES EARLY EXPLOITATION OF THE DISPUTED AREA OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE FOR THEM AND WHOSE MILITARY STRENGTH GIVES THEM CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF ANY EVENTUAL ATTEMPT BY TUNISIA TO ENFORCE ITS CLAIMS. ALBIS WAS PLEASED THAT THE NORWEGIAN VESSEL REPORTEDLY WOULD NOT ENTER THE DISPUTED AREA.

2. THE FRENCH DESIRE TO CALM THE DISPUTE STEMS FROM THE CONVICTION THAT NO MATTER HOW JUST OR UNJUST THE TUNISIAN CLAIMS, THE WEST SHOULD TRY TO AVOID BEING PUT IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO SUPPORT THEM OPENLY. IN ANY CASE, ALBIS CONTINUED, TUNISIA'S ATTACHMENT TO THE WEST IS CLEAR. THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO AVOID ISOLATING QADHAFI AND INCREASING HIS ALREADY WORRYING RELIANCE ON THE SOVIETS. ANY ACTION LEADING TO INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE SHELF DISPUTE WOULD TEND TO ACCOMPLISH THE LATTER, HENCE THE FRENCH HOPE THAT THE PARTIES CAN BE PERSUADED TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE THEMSELVES WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE UNSC.

3. REVERTING TO THE EARLIER FRENCH REQUEST FOR THE US ANALYSIS OF THE COMPETING LEGAL CLAIMS (REF B), ALBIS ASKED IF WE COULD PROVIDE THE FRENCH WITH A COPY OF THE ELY STUDY DONE FOR BUTTES PETROLEUM, OR, AT A MINIMUM, SECRET

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A DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICABLE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW HE APPLIED TO DETERMINE THE FIVE HYPOTHETICAL BOUNDARY LINES (STATE 72492).

4. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT THE DEPARTMENT PROVIDE GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDING TO THE REQUEST IN PARA 3. IN THIS CONNECTION, IS THERE A POSSIBILITY THAT ELY HIMSELF MIGHT TRAVEL TO PARIS WHERE HE COULD BRIEF THE QUAI DIRECTLY?
HARLAN

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NNN

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Disposition History: n/a
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